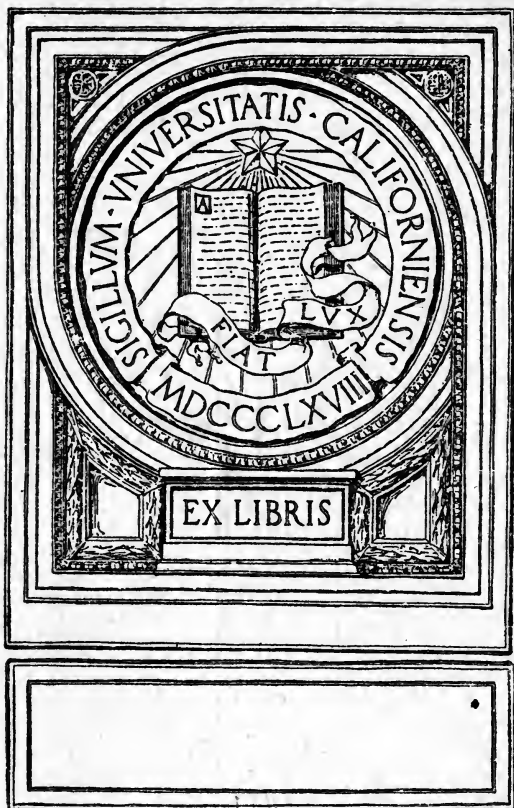


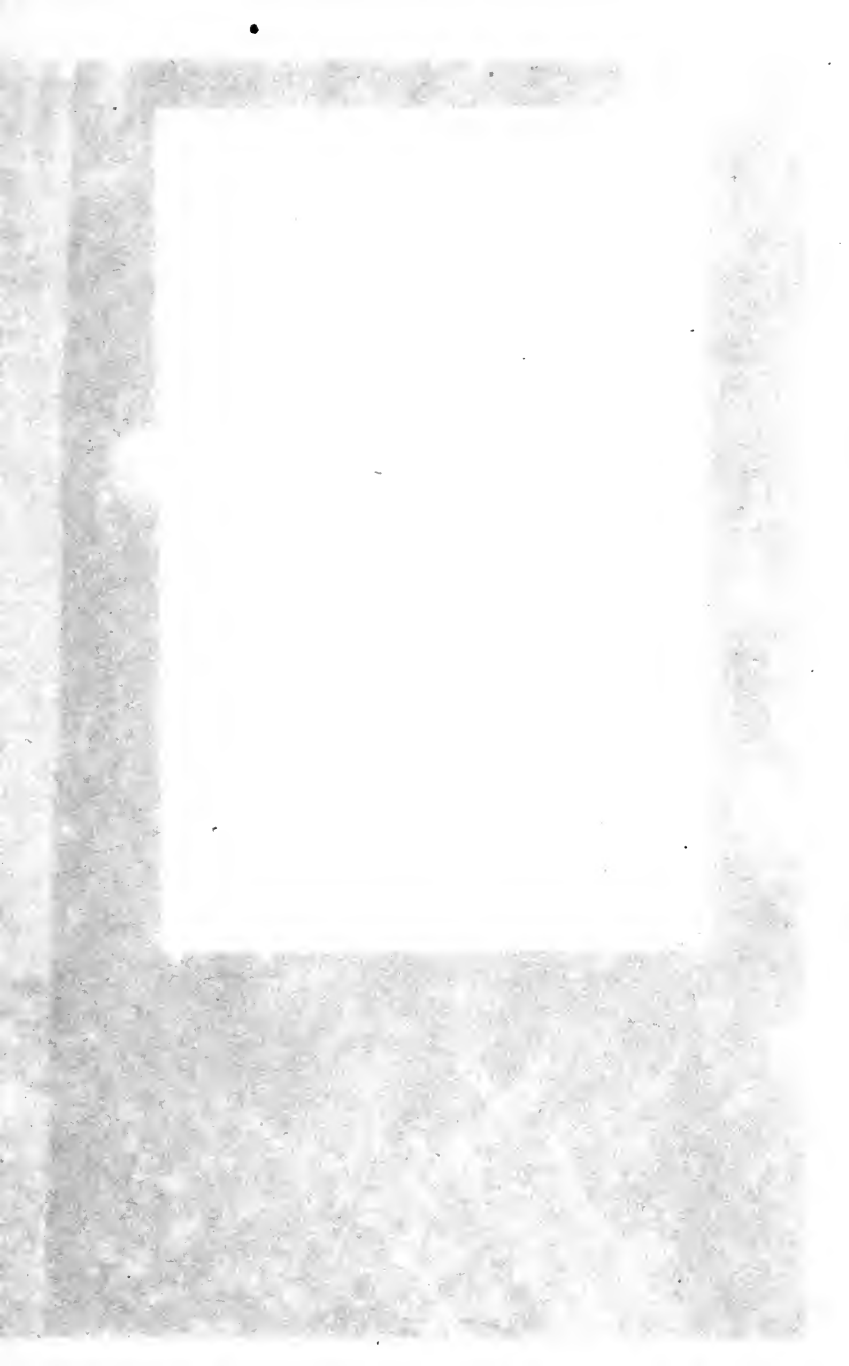
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# MY LADY'S BOOK





# MY LADY'S BOOK

BY

GERALD GOULD



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MAIN

TO B.

*Dear, these for you ; and since with these  
Come hopes as sweet as memories,  
And thought more rare than to be caught  
In any web less fine than thought,  
And love so gentle as to make  
The world one service for your sake  
—May I a little hope to please,  
Since thus I bring my heart with these ?*

*If anything I dream or do  
Is fit to offer up to you,  
You know, who gave it, how I live  
To make the most of what you give,  
And how the songs I write are meant  
For your acceptance and content  
—Ah, let that best of smiles ensue  
On this the best that I can do !*



I

My love is fair, she is better than fair to me ;  
She puts me in mind of a wild white sea-gull  
flying over the sea ;  
She puts me in mind of a dim wind going softly in  
the grass  
—Of things remembered, and young things, and  
things that shall come to pass.

Always from a boy, as I walked the evening  
road  
And saw the curtained windows where the warm  
light glowed,  
I have desired little children, and old songs, and  
sleep,  
And an ache has come in my throat for the need  
I had to weep.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

But now the doors of all kind homes have I  
passed through,

And found the room of my own heart warm and  
bright with you,

And found the little children there, playing round  
the fire,

And found the peace that is dreamier than sleep,  
and the songs beyond desire.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### II

I CANNOT love my Lady as I would ;  
She is past loving lovable—she tries  
With childish hands the portals of surprise,  
And finds by faith those secrets understood.  
She wears the double crown of womanhood ;  
Maternal thoughts make bright her maiden  
eyes ;  
Wisdom would not be pure were she not wise,  
Nor goodness beautiful were she not good.

I have held her in my arms and called her  
“ Sweet ” ;  
Of this high spirit have I said “ My own ”

## MY LADY'S BOOK

—High, for all hearts know peace where she is  
known,

Her hands are full of service when they greet,  
And round about her in the grievous street  
The happy airs of Paradise are blown.



## MY LADY'S BOOK

### III

My Lady grieved for a flower that died,  
    Crushed to earth by a careless tread :  
My Lady turned to me at her side,  
    And "Keep this flower for my sake," she said.

We had been glad of each other, and gay ;  
    We had walked and talked for a sunny hour,  
Until we came where the dead flower lay  
    —My Lady is soft and sweet as a flower.

Warmth of summer is in her cheek,  
    Gold of spring in the hair of her head.  
I took her gift, but I could not speak :  
    "Keep this flower for my sake," she said.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

Poor dead flower that I shall keep,

Mind me how bright was the sun that hour !—

Is love so bitter ? Is love so deep ?

My Lady is soft and sweet as a flower.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### IV

I LOVE you : is not that enough  
To make a smoothness of the rough ?  
You love me : shall not that suffice  
To sweeten worlds of pain and vice ?

If love were pleasure—if we meant  
To dally with a poor content  
In soft seclusion from the stir  
Of hearts that know no comforter

—Ah, then the loud accusing seas  
Would make a question of our ease !  
Ah, then the fatal stars would write  
Our condemnation on the night !

## MY LADY'S BOOK

But since your eyes can summon sense  
Before the soul's omnipotence,  
And show what heavy hands of blame  
Fetter the centuries with shame ;

Since like a sunny rain your hair  
Nourishes hope and drowns despair,  
And thoughtless music of your tongue  
Persuades the old earth to be young ;

Since but to see you is to guess  
The unlonely source of loneliness,  
And but to touch you is to know  
The beauty at the heart of woe ;

Since in our love and longing meet  
The bitter and the saving sweet ;  
Since with free hands, with proffered lips,  
With needs, with utter comradeships,

## MY LADY'S BOOK

The faith that we are keepers of  
Has drawn the circle of our love  
Round all our lovely fellows, thus  
Summing humanity in us

—Since this we keep for surest sure,  
Our perfect passion makes us pure,  
And gives the right I have to take  
Your beauty for the whole world's sake,

When in our oneness, heart to heart,  
We cannot think our thoughts apart,  
And life goes from us in a mist  
Of kissing and of being kissed.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### V

Love came smiling for our beguiling ;

I said to my dear, "Let us be beguiled" :

My dear said to me, "What good will it do  
me ? "

But I said to my dear, "Have the faith of a  
child."

My dear was wary for the joys that vary,

For the laughter that comes and the sighs  
that go ;

She said, "Shall I fetter for worse or better

The things that are known to what none can  
know ? "

## MY LADY'S BOOK

I said, "I will teach you"—I said, "I will reach  
you

In the secret place where your shyness hides ;  
I will bring for your knowing the winds in their  
blowing,

And the bright moon-service of sorrowful tides ;

"I will make you stories of ancient glories,  
The past shall bless you as the future shall  
do——"

But my dear said to me, "If you must woo  
me,

Is there no present way to woo ?

"Is love any fairer for being the bearer  
Of these good things by which good hearts  
live ?

If love came lonely, 'twould still be only  
All that there is to get or give."

## MY LADY'S BOOK

I said to my dearest, "Your words come nearest  
A deeper faith than the faith of a child,"  
And she laughed—"My poet, I know it, I  
know it ;  
You have given all gifts to the love-beguiled."



## MY LADY'S BOOK

### VI

SOME lovers make comparison in love,  
And call their lady after that or this—  
Like honey find the sweetness of her kiss,  
Or her soft speech like language of the dove ;  
The sky is not too high for doubting of,  
Whether herein it does not show amiss,  
And everything that good for certain is  
They take for good—then name one name above.

But I'll not call my Lady dark or bright  
By any other measure than her own ;  
She is the rightness by which life is right,  
Sums all perfections that the world has shown,  
And is to be esteemed herself alone,  
Not more than morning, neither less than night.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### VII

I WENT before breakfast in a field full of butter-  
cups ;

My love was not there, my love was far away ;  
But there before breakfast in the field full of  
buttercups

My love came and found me, came from far  
away.

She came with the sunlight about her, caressing  
her,

She came with the dreams not yet rubbed from  
her eyes ;

Like a grave happy child was the sunlight  
caressing her,

And her dreams like happy children lurked and  
laughed in her eyes.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

Something was loosened that had hardened in the  
heart of me ;

Wide through the world flowed the golden  
stream of love ;

Did the dawn-thrush call through the air or from  
the heart of me ?

Though my love was absent, I was happy  
with my love.

# MY LADY'S BOOK

## VIII

I too have loved a goddess, set  
About with dreams so clear  
The heart can never quite forget  
Nor cease to hold them dear.

I too, in places never known  
To any sort of men  
For dwelling, save to such alone  
As surely I was then,

Have nursed desire beyond the scope  
Of this world to fulfil,  
And found achievement match with hope  
And sense prove one with will.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

I too have clasped, with passionate breath,  
    Upon her bed of flowers,  
A form too vast to know such death  
    Or ev'n such life as ours,

And watched along the glimmering lines  
    Of limbs august and bright  
A moonbeam such as never shines  
    In any mortal night.

The liberal kisses shed through me,  
    The kisses from me drawn,  
Were bitterer than the wasteful sea  
    And sweeter than the dawn.

What follows?—Ev'n as I am now,  
    I cannot choose but find  
That goddess-light on every brow  
    That means a woman's mind ;

## MY LADY'S BOOK

No strange glad thing that women do,  
No strangeness of their pain,  
But is a part of what I knew  
And am to know again.

And you, beloved ? In the deep  
Of those regarding eyes  
Are hidden dreams, for human sleep  
Too innocent and wise.

Where did you gather them, my dear ?  
In fields without a name.  
Tell me, what music did you hear ?—  
For I have heard the same.

But for the wisdom that I got  
From that divine embrace,  
I should have met and loved, but not  
Have known or claimed your face.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

But for such mingling, calm and keen,  
That every pulse was soul,  
Could any part be heard or seen,  
Since sense would miss the whole ?

Oh what were you and what was I ?  
We were what all hearts are,  
And lo ! the changes of the sky  
Move round a single star ;

And come or go and lose or gain  
And promise or recall,  
The future and the past are plain  
In every hour of all.

Oh coming of your worshipped feet,  
Light of your hallowed brow !  
I too have loved a goddess—Sweet,  
I love a goddess now.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### IX

I LOVED a girl—she is dead—  
She was like you,  
But younger—when you turn your head  
My dream of her comes true.

She had that zest of youth  
Which turns to tears ;  
You are to her what stronger truth  
Is to strong hopes and fears.

I loved her long and well,  
And always must ;  
She was the heav'n amid my hell,  
The spirit in my dust.



## MY LADY'S BOOK

But a time comes when these

Grow all one thing ;

You are that time—and lo ! you please,

My Queen, to crown me King !

I ached with the why and whence

Of her regard ;

She was too easy for my sense

And for my thought too hard.

Each several moment she

Dies, and you live ;

She had so much to take from me,

You have so much to give.

She had such childish ways,

Such childish eyes,

The wanton spring would speak her praise

Strangely, from virgin skies.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

Well have you caught the fall  
Of her soft hair ;  
For she's not anything at all  
But just the self you were.

Moment by moment, so,  
She is not, you are ;  
And oh ! I love her well, but oh !  
I love you better far !

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### X

WHEN Roland's armies perished round him, he  
Was left alone at Roncesvalles ; night  
Hung ready to enclose an ended fight,  
Hush the harsh music of the swords, and be  
As calm as that first darkness that set free  
The first day from the trouble of its light.

But Roland knew the twilight held his fate,  
Nor till he died could any star be born ;  
And idly called to mind how he had sworn  
To summon succour, when his need was  
great,  
From Oliver, his lover and his mate :  
But Oliver no more could hear his horn.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

So clear, so very far, the message sped,  
The chivalry that compassed Charlemagne  
Knew all at once that all they loved was slain,  
And the past came upon them, and they said  
"The old fights are fought and the old heroes dead;  
Roland will never blow his horn again."

Princess, when night shall darken on the day  
Made lovely with our loving—brave no less  
Than songs remembered of high-heartedness,  
And legends learnt by children in their play  
—Tell me, you will not wish one hour away,  
Of all we had to share, Princess, Princess?

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XI

HERE have my hopes come home, and in your  
face

Have found such resting-place  
As wild birds find in silence, who requite  
Their eager day with night ;  
They make their home of darkness, I of light ;  
Eternal mine, theirs only for a space.

All dreams that hurt the heart and vexed the  
head

Have leave to go to bed ;  
Only the one dream that of all was known  
For properly my own  
Triumphs : my feet, that lost their way alone,  
Learn of your wisdom what wise paths to tread.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

Alike in rest of hopes and speed of dreams

You knit the world's extremes

Into a single beauty : you by heart

Know all in every part,

And every fire of nature and of art

With you, burns true—without you, merely  
seems.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XII

WHEN I am dead, if I see  
How you need me in the night,  
I shall ask God to have pity on me  
And take away my sight :  
If I hear how your sobs swell .  
Where the lonely pillow is strange to your  
    head,  
I shall know too well  
I ought not to be dead.

You understand, I want so much  
To comfort you, to cherish you,  
I fear to think that I might need to touch  
And not be able to.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

God is aware how much I can bear  
Of pain, as of bliss  
—Surely He will have a care  
To spare me this.



## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XIII

I NEVER had need to love you so ;

I'd have been content with far, far less  
—Only to worship, to follow, to know

I could add a touch to your happiness,  
Perhaps, for a moment, by waiting long,  
And asking nothing, and grudging never,  
And always trusting my love was strong  
To keep us safe for ever and ever !

—To understand how the waving way  
Your hair on the line of your forehead lies  
Makes the hot heart suddenly stay  
And the hot tears suddenly come to the eyes

## MY LADY'S BOOK

—To tremble if ever your brief hand's blessing  
Found me and passed like a dream of wings,  
Half ignoring and half caressing,  
Full of its favour to worthless things !

—Only to guess, when you turned and smiled,  
How a grave gay glance, secret and free,  
Of old set the nations running wild  
With swords a-glimmer from sea to sea,  
With leaping of torches and screaming of towers  
And puddling of blood—and, after all,  
That glance still young as the first spring flowers  
With their hint how the autumn leaves must  
fall !

—Only to glory whenever you came ;  
Only to sicken whenever you went,  
Lest a chance too certain and strong for blame  
Should rob my passion of its content

## MY LADY'S BOOK

—To give, to take—with pain to be torn

Out of earth into heaven in every kiss

—All that, I needed and could have borne,

And more—but oh not this, not this !

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XIV

“IN vain, in vain !—My fingers tire,  
And when my muse like a blown fire  
Lets from her circling pinions run  
Bright gleams they gather of the sun,  
She snatches from my sense too soon  
Her plumage of the golden tune,  
And sweeping, waning, leaves half-heard  
The pure unpurchasable word.”

So sang I sadly where the flow  
Of shadowy water made me know  
Time, the mere shadow, far too strong  
Alike for silence and for song ;

## MY LADY'S BOOK

And half I seemed a shadow too,  
And half forgot, as children do,  
What ill had troubled me, though still  
The world was heavy with my ill.

Then you came to me dressed in dreams,  
With that shy look of yours which seems  
Almost too beautiful, as though  
Last night had grudged to let you go ;  
You came as one should come who brings  
A garland of immortal things,  
And set your garland on my head,  
And—" Sing again for me," you said.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XV

SPENDTHRIFT of peace, whose garnered sweet  
Not all your giving can deplete,  
How easily your hands dispense  
The happy fruits of innocence !

How perfectly you comprehend  
That man must have his soul for friend—  
And make, where carelessly you go,  
A song that teaches others so !

You to earth's least exalted slave  
Grant more than he knows how to crave,  
And to the heart that craves indeed  
Fulfil the measure of its need.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

To want—to have—no grace can bless  
With wider wealth of happiness :  
There are two gifts, and only two,  
And both alike proceed from you.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XVI

SUMMER will come, and then with steady  
Droop and drift the year will go ;  
But Spring is here already  
—Didn't you know ?

All that was past is happy and here now,  
And the future sings to my senses so,  
I must share it with somebody dear now  
—Didn't you know ?

Your blue eyes dance to the skies above you,  
Your white feet dance to the road below,  
And I love you, love you, love you  
—Didn't you know ?



## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XVII

THE wood grew dark that had been shady,  
The young strong year seemed sad and tired ;  
Suddenly then my lovely Lady  
Gave me her hands that I desired ;  
The chill of evening changed the motion  
Of all the thoughts we had shared that day ;  
My Lady's eyes are as blue as the ocean,  
But the grey of evening made them grey.

As the face of a nymph, the deep lake's daughter,  
Looking up in the starshine might,  
Through the waving shadows that changed like  
water  
Her dear dim face shone starry and white ;

## MY LADY'S BOOK

Her hands were cold, and something urgent  
Shook her lips and found no speech ;  
I knew the sob of dreams insurgent  
In the soul that only my soul can reach.

Far away and hushed from hearing  
Were the pitiful sounds that came to mind ;  
Here was only the kind night nearing  
For us who have found the nights so kind ;  
But quiet tells tales that can strike colder  
Than any that storm has the secret of,  
And the only thing that's surer and older  
Than twilight sorrow is twilight love.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XVIII

IF I have failed, as fail we must,  
Who buy our being at the price  
Of the shut gates of Paradise,  
And dress our very dreams in dust—  
Who have no certainty except  
The sense which lonely children keep,  
Seeing a rainbow fair as sleep,  
That God was with them when they slept ;

If I have failed in Love's high art,  
More happy and more careful much  
Than that wild wisdom of the touch  
Whereby our painters play their part

## MY LADY'S BOOK

In shaping nature—or whereby  
Our grave musicians from the strings  
Compel the stubborn soul of things  
To put on life and so to die ;

If I have left myself forsworn,  
My passionate service unfulfilled ;  
If the poor altars that I build  
Have missed one flower they should have worn ;  
If any day has found me slack  
In the endeavour that I cherish ;  
If I have let one purpose perish  
That now no day will give me back ;

If foolishly I have subtracted  
From my joy's sum, and for disgrace  
Denied to any time or place  
Tribute my heart would have exacted—  
For all my faults that must outlive me  
And mock my failure, you can tell

## MY LADY'S BOOK

If I am sorry ; but, as well,  
You know I do not say, "Forgive me."

Dear, this I am ; for this you take me ;  
I love with what I know of good ;  
I have but served you as I could,  
And what I shall be, you will make me ;  
You would not have me bring excuse,  
Or treat love as a debt to pay ;  
If I have failed, I can but say,  
"I love you."—Is it any use ?

## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XIX

WHAT used to mock the effort spent  
In vain attempt to guess the whole  
Is now the coin of my content  
And common language of my soul ;  
The unnumbered stars, the gaugeless sky,  
Serve but as signs to know you by.

For as the thwarted thought requites  
Desire of bringing time to book,  
So does a world of infinites  
Shine calm and countless in your look ;  
More lovely and more strange are these  
Than the unislanded dim seas.

## MY LADY'S BOOK

And as the dizzy sense denies  
    Conception of eternal space,  
So am I baffled by your eyes  
    And lost in worshipping your face,  
And all your movements wake in me  
The music of infinity.

Imprisoned as men are, they run  
    At large in dreams through day and night ;  
Blind, yet they know there is a sun  
    That floods the turning spheres in light ;  
And very far beyond my view  
Burns on in faith my love for you.

O teacher of the unchanging laws,  
    O priestess at the immortal shrine,  
What was the grace, the dawn, the cause ?  
    What flaming mercy made you mine ?  
—Lo, how my Queen forgets her reign,  
Choosing to be a child again !

## MY LADY'S BOOK

We find the earth amazed with flowers,  
Our laughter haunts the woods of youth ;  
We live again the enchanted hours  
Whose happy spells are love and truth :  
My Lady takes me by the hand  
And walks with me in Fairyland.



## MY LADY'S BOOK

### XX

Look back, look forward, Sweet,  
Still shall you find the same  
—One blessedness complete,  
One joy untouched with blame ;  
And when descending night  
Shall dim the day's endeavour,  
The stars shall light  
No challenge of our right  
To love for ever.

Amid the shifting streams  
Of birth and life and death,  
We cheapen not our dreams,  
Nor spend them with our breath ;

## MY LADY'S BOOK

Change, past and yet to be,  
We guess not, nor refuse it ;  
In loving we  
Have our eternity,  
And cannot lose it.

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